

Artists explore television as an electrical medium

EXHIBITION. Information, Works and Activities: an exhibition of video installations, tape showings, workshops and performances. Now through Nov. 28. Everson Museum.

By Eva Lanyi

Although critics have praised and scorned media theoretician Marshall McLuhan's tenet, "The medium is the message," a group of artists visiting the Everson Museum may be proving he is right.

The goal of artists from the Experimental Television Center in Binghamton is to "explore the visual possibilities that are unique to this (the television) medium," according to Peer Bode, artist-in-residence at the center.

The exhibit explores television purely as an electrical medium, just as

a painter might experiment with watercolors or oils. The different visual images the artist creates on the screen are like paintings come to life. They have color and form, but because of tv's electrical nature, the images are fluid; they move and change as the electrical impulses vary.

Using the Jones Colorizer, a special piece of equipment developed by David Jones of the center; and a setup of video cameras, monitors and tv screens, artists mix and color tv images.

The result is a fascinating array of video effects, intriguing because while the artist can control the coloring and mixing of the images to a certain extent, the final result is unpredictable because the electrical impulse produced as images pass through the Colorizer is not constant.

Bode explained how one type of image can be produced with this system.

The artist begins with an image created by feedback. With this technique, a black-and-white video camera is placed at an angle and pointed at its own monitor, producing a moving geometric shape. This image is processed through the Colorizer and projected on five separate tv screens. The multiple screens are used to increase the viewer's involvement in the image.

The artist can then mix out various parts of the image using the Colorizer. Parts of the geometric image are deleted through this process and replaced by a different image chosen by the artist as he directs another video camera at whatever he wants.

To achieve color the artist turns a knob on the Colorizer and adds an electrical impulse. The purpose is not necessarily to achieve realistic color, but to explore the range of colors that can be made by mixing basic red, green and blue.

The Colorizer is only one system used by artists at the center. They have also developed other computer and oscillator systems which produce still different effects.

The work of artists at the Experimental Television Center is art in its purest form. The end result is less important than the creative process used to achieve it. The medium is more important than the message, because only through television and other electrical equipment can such "fluid paintings" be produced.

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